

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
16 October 1973

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

MIDDLE EAST

Situation Report Number 44
(As of 1630 EDT)

THE MILITARY SITUATION

State Dept
review
completed

GENERAL

1. The Israeli force that crossed the Suez Canal north of Great Bitter Lake early today apparently has as its objective the raiding of Egyptian SAM and anticraft batteries on the west bank. The force appears to be small--an armored battalion supported by infantry troops. The Egyptians claim to have engaged the Israeli force with armor and mechanized infantry units and by early afternoon to have inflicted heavy losses on the Israelis. The Israeli Air Force continues to pound targets around Port Said, and both sides have conducted limited air strikes in support of ground forces in the Sinai.

2. Heavy fighting continued late today in the central sector of the Syrian front with the Israelis claiming to have inflicted heavy losses on Syrian, Jordanian, and Iraqi armor elements. Both sides conducted air strikes in support of their forces with the Israelis claiming to have inflicted further losses on the already badly mauled Syrian Air Force. Tel Aviv claims that its strategy is to attack the forces of other Arab states one by one as they arrive on the Syrian front in order to prevent the Arab units from setting up coordinated operations.

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EGYPTIAN FRONT

3. The Israelis continue to report that they have crossed the Suez Canal and are fighting on the west bank. An Israeli situation report, issued at 1600 hours local time (1400Z) stated that Israeli forces attacked the Egyptian 21st Armored Division and the 16th Infantry Division at the northern edge of Great Bitter Lake early this morning, and crossed the canal with 20 tanks to Deversoir with the objective of raiding Egyptian SAM and antiaircraft batteries on the west bank.

4. A military communique issued in Cairo has confirmed the crossing. According to the Egyptians, a "ferocious battle" was raging with armored, infantry, and mechanized infantry units participating. The Egyptian Air Force was said to be assisting the ground troops.

5. The number of Israeli tanks reported to have crossed suggests that the force consists of an armored battalion supported by infantry troops.

6. According to a senior Egyptian defense official, the Egyptians had repulsed the Israeli attack by 1300 local time (1200Z) and denied that any significant Israeli force had crossed the canal. The Egyptians claimed that they employed a new tactic in this battle: withdrawing prior to engagement. The Egyptian brigade on the southern flank reportedly withdrew several kilometers west of its original position, while another brigade on the northern flank "button-hooked" and came in behind the advancing Israeli units. Initial Egyptian field reports according to the source, indicate that the Israeli force suffered 400 casualties and lost 32 tanks and three amphibious vehicles.

7. Other air activity reported along the southern front indicates that the Israelis hit targets around Port Said again this afternoon. Egyptian SAMs reportedly fired on the attacking aircraft and one parachute was seen opening-- indicating a probable Israeli loss of an aircraft. Both the Israelis and the Egyptians flew limited strikes in the Sinai this afternoon in support of ground operations.

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8. The 1600 Israeli situation report states that the Israeli Air Force attacked the Egyptian airfield at Wadi Al Jandali today, shooting down two MIG-21s and again attacked the radar station at Baltim. This same report indicates that the Israeli Navy shelled coastal radar sites east and west of Alexandria during the past 24 hours. No Israeli losses were reported. An Egyptian Komar missile boat was reported to have been set afire when one of its own missiles ignited during launch.

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SYRIAN FRONT

9. Tank battles continued into this afternoon in the central sector of the Syrian front, near Al Harrah. An Israeli military spokesman claimed that by mid-afternoon about 30 Syrian, 30 Jordanian, and 60 Iraqi tanks had been destroyed. He also said that the Syrians flew nearly 30 sorties against Israeli ground forces, but that six of the attacking aircraft were shot down. The Israeli also claimed that the Iraqi unit was "badly chewed up" and that the Jordanian unit retired to its original starting point at Jasim.

10. An Israeli spokesman described Tel Aviv's strategy on the Syrian front as attacking the armored brigades of other Arab states arriving at the front and destroying them "piecemeal" before they can establish a unified command. He reiterated that the acquisition of "real estate" as such is not an Israeli objective.

11. The spokesman also claimed that, according to Israeli intercepts, Soviet pilots were ferrying recently assembled MIG-21s from Aleppo to Dumayr and An Nasriye airfields north of Damascus.

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12. According to [redacted] Syrian forces may have advanced two to three miles this afternoon in the northern sector to Tell ech-Chaar overlooking the Al Qunaytirah-Damascus road. The [redacted] assessment is based on the

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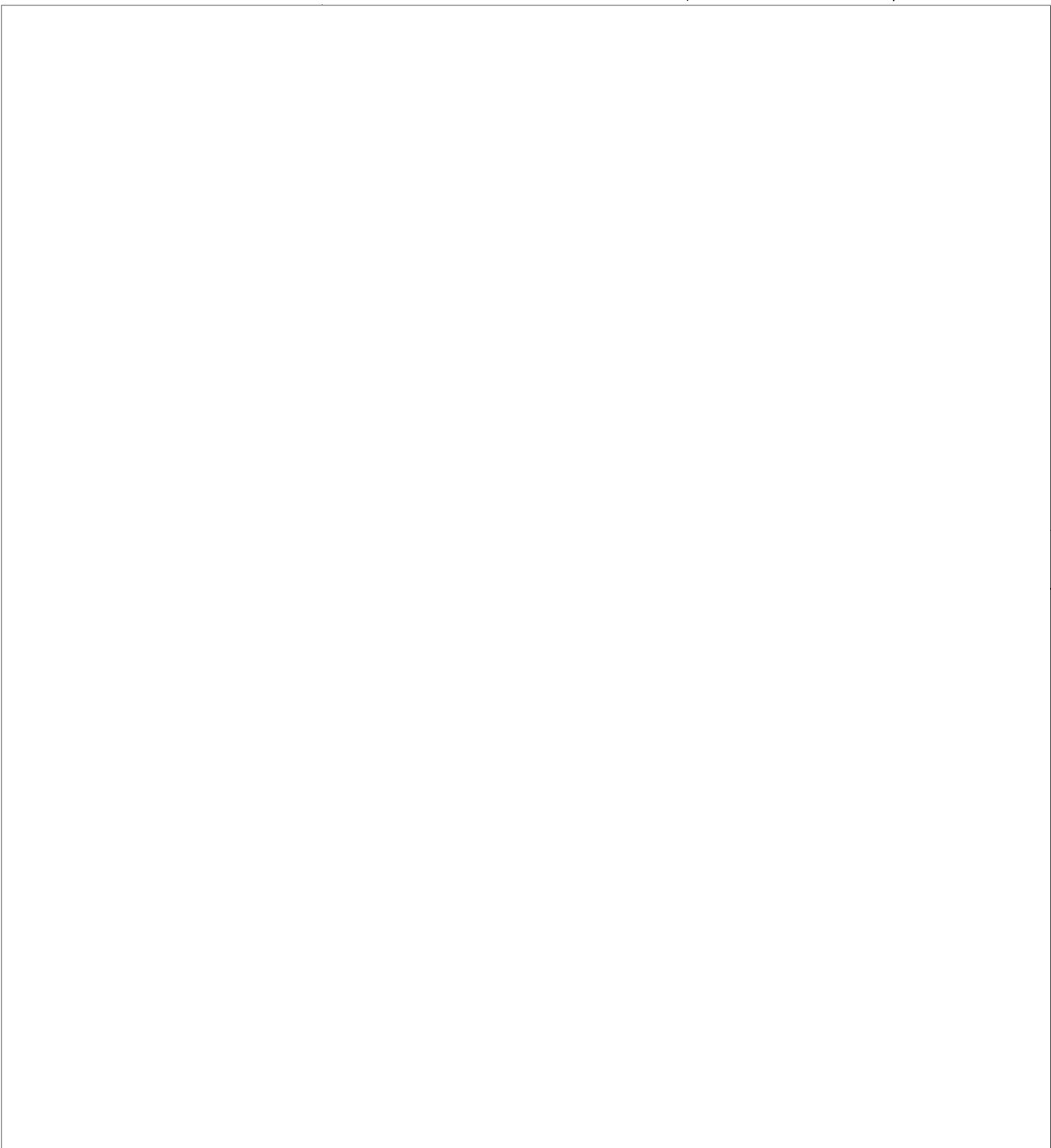
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location of Israeli and Syrian artillery fire, however, and may not reflect the actual positions of either force. Israeli fire at Tell ech-Chaar, the dominant terrain feature in the area, suggests that Syrian forces may be occupying it. The [redacted] noted that the Israelis would be able to supply their salient by using routes north of the road even if the Syrians do hold Tell ech-Chaar.



16. There has been little change in the positions of Soviet combatants in the Mediterranean. Soviet warships continue to remain near the USS Independence, south of Crete. Ships in this force include the flagship of the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron--a submarine tender--plus a destroyer and a cruiser.

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SOVIET REACTION TO US SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

19. Soviet media continue to issue brief, non-polemical reports on US response to the conflict. A TASS dispatch this afternoon noted that the US helicopter carrier Iwo Jima will depart for the Mediterranean with 2,000 marines. TASS said the ship will be leaving from North Carolina, thus implying that it will take some time to reach its destination. A Soviet domestic radio broadcast repeated a Washington Post report that the US will supply Israel with Phantoms and M-60 tanks.

OIL DELIVERIES

20. The war has interrupted some Middle Eastern oil shipments to Europe. All of the pipeline terminals in the eastern Mediterranean have been closed. The Syrian terminals have been damaged, and high insurance rates have made it unprofitable for tankers to load in Lebanon and Israel. Although liftings of Libyan oil have increased moderately since the beginning of the war, Tripoli is imposing some restrictions on its destination. For example, tankers headed for Greece have been refused oil on the assumption that it could serve to fuel the US Sixth Fleet.

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21. The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe are maintaining normal oil exports of 1.1 million barrels per day to Western Europe. However, some 240,000 bpd of scheduled deliveries from the Middle East and North Africa probably have now been cut off. This reduction may force a diversion of Soviet supplies from Western to Eastern Europe. In this event, Sweden would be the country most affected, followed by Italy and West Germany.

22. On the nights of 7 and 8 October, two oil tankers--one American and one Greek--under charter to a US oil company were halted by an unidentified destroyer or destroyers off the coast of Djibouti at the entrance to the Red Sea and told they were entering a war zone. Each had been headed for Ras Shukhayr on Egypt's Suez Gulf coast, and each turned back and headed for the Persian Gulf. Each ship master reported that, although he could not identify the destroyer, he believed it to be Soviet. It is more likely, however, that the destroyer was one of the two Egyptian destroyers presently located at Aden.

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IRAQ

23. According to an Israeli defense official, additional Iraqi forces are being sent or have already arrived in Syria. The force reportedly includes two armored brigades. [redacted] the headquarters of one of the armored brigades is now located on the outskirts of Damascus.

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SUDAN

24. [redacted] Sudan has sent 1,600 army troops to participate in the Arab war effort. The force is composed of infantry, paratroopers, armored units, and military police. Antiaircraft guns, armored vehicles, and some artillery pieces were sent with the troops.

SOMALIA

25. The Somali Embassy in Paris reports Somalia is arranging to send volunteers to Egypt and Syria.

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KUWAIT

26. The Kuwaiti National Assembly, meeting in closed session, decided today to donate \$350 million to the "Arab liberation battle." The Assembly's statement did not specify which states will receive the funds, and the press has quoted informed sources as saying that the government will decide how to allocate the grant between Egypt and Syria. There has been no indication that Jordan will receive any of the money or has yet succeeded in obtaining a restoration of the post-1967 Kuwaiti subsidy.

FEDAYEEN

27. A senior Fatah official stated on 11 October that Fatah will begin a major terrorist campaign against US nationals in Beirut if the US intervenes directly in the Middle East. By "direct intervention", the official apparently meant the use of US troops in the fighting. The Fatah official emphasized the planning was only in its initial stages. Fatah officials reportedly have been instructed to begin obtaining the names and addresses of US officials and businessmen in Beirut as a base of information for future assassinations and kidnappings.

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28. [redacted] Saiga chief Zuhayr Muhsin stated [redacted] that his organization currently does not intend to mount terrorist operations against US nationals or installations in the Middle East. Muhsin also expressed his personal opinion that the other major fedayeen groups are committed to direct military confrontation with Israel and are not currently planning terrorist operations. Muhsin said that the role of the fedayeen is to prevent Israel from attacking Syria through southern Lebanon by mounting a holding operation against any advancing Israeli force to buy time for Syrian reinforcements to reach the area.

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ANNEX

Arab Reaction to US Airlift

1. Saudi Arabia today passed an aide memoire to representatives in Jidda of the Common Market nations warning that the Saudis may reduce oil production in response to the US airlift to Israel, according to a sensitive State Department cable. The aide memoire to the EEC stated that, faced with a need to respond to the US airlift, King Faysal might find it necessary to cut back oil production unless the European states attempt to induce a change in US Middle East policy and specifically in the current US arms policy. The note warned that Europe would be the first affected by such a cutback.

2. The newly-arrived US ambassador was treated to a similar warning in his introductory call at the Foreign Ministry, where Acting Foreign Minister Masud, expressing regret at the US action, stated that Faysal might resort "somehow" to the use of the oil weapon. Masud added, however, that Saudi Arabia valued its relations with the US, which should give no credence to rumors that relations with Washington would be broken.

25X1 3. There has been little indication of what position the Arab oil ministers are contemplating at tomorrow's conference of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) in Kuwait, [redacted]

[redacted] Kuwait has been railroading the boycott concept and is supported by Iraq and Libya. Press reports from Kuwait indicate that those ministers who have arrived, while acknowledging that they have proposals to table at the conference, are not talking specifics.

25X1 4. The Saudi media, in the meantime, have given no coverage today to the US announcement, and American military advisers have met with mixed reactions from Saudi officers, who have expressed, in an apparently restrained fashion, a general failure to understand why the US supports Israel's effort to retain the territory occupied in 1967.

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5. An Arab diplomat [redacted] stated [redacted] that a large-scale US resupply effort will "certainly" result in the loss of whatever presence and influence the US now maintains in the Arab world, even in conservative Arab states. The diplomat made the comment in a regretful rather than a denunciatory tone, noting that, although he is sorry the situation has come to this, the Arabs "mean business" this time and will risk total destruction to achieve the liberation of the occupied territories.

6. The Jordanian press reported the US decision factually in coverage today; there was no editorializing, and the US Embassy expects that official reaction will be muted, with public sentiment ranging from the resigned to the extreme negative. The government, however, will probably attempt to restrain media reaction to the extent it is able. Prime Minister Rifai has commented to a sensitive Agency source that President Sadat's reaction to the US resupply effort during his speech today was moderate and will not have the effect of inspiring anti-American actions in Jordan--or, presumably, elsewhere. Rifai contrasted Sadat's reaction favorably with Nasir's in similar circumstances six years ago.

7. A similar unhappy resignation appears to be the rule in Morocco. King Hassan was disturbed by the US decision, which he believes will have the effect of prolonging the war. The reaction of the Moroccan people has been characterized as "bad," but Moroccan security officials do not foresee anti-American demonstrations, largely because the people assume that the US always supports Israel anyway and feel that the latest US decision was predictable.

8. Lebanese Prime Minister Solh called the US ambassador in today for a two-hour exposition of his views on the US airlift, taking a friendly but concerned attitude. He outlined what he believes will be the adverse effect of the US action on the situation in the Middle East and expressed fears that irreparable damage will be done to Arab-American relations. He urged US action to reassure the Arabs that its policies are not totally devoted to supporting Israel and upholding the continued occupation of Arab territories.

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9. The US Embassy in Beirut fears that an organized anti-American campaign is being mounted in the Lebanese capital. Loudspeaker trucks patrolled the Muslim quarters of the city last night and this morning broadcasting anti-US propaganda and calling, in the wake of the US announcement, for strikes against US interests. The Embassy has reliable reports that much of the press criticism and planned popular agitation is being inspired by the Soviets and the Egyptians, and that the agitators may be awaiting a signal from Cairo and Damascus radios to begin attacks on American interests. If this is the case, the speeches of Presidents Sadat and Asad today, both of which played down the US resupply effort, may have dampened the ardor of any aspiring demonstrators.

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